

Methods and Forms of Work among Communist Party Women: Theses

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Basic Principles

1 The Third Congress of the Communist International, in conjunction with the Second International Conference of Communist women, confirms once again the decision of the First and Second Congresses that all the Communist Parties of the West and the East need to increase work amongst the female proletariat, educating the broad mass of working women in Communist ideas and drawing them into the struggle for Soviet power, for the construction of the Soviet workers' republic.

Throughout the world the working class, and consequently working women as well, are confronting the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The capitalist economic system has entered a blind alley; there is no scope for the development of the productive forces within the framework of capitalism. The sharp decline in living standards of the working people, the inability of the bourgeoisie to restore production, the rise of speculation, the disintegration of production, unemployment, price fluctuations and the gap between prices and wages, lead everywhere to the inevitable sharpening of the class struggle. This struggle decides who and which system is to lead, administer and organise production – either a small group of bourgeois or the working class basing itself on the principles of Communism.

The newly emergent proletarian class must, in accordance with the laws of economic development, take the apparatus of production into its own hands and create new economic forms. Only then will it be in a position to encourage the maximum development of the productive forces, which are held in check by the anarchy of capitalist production.

While power is in the hands of the bourgeois class, the proletariat is unable to organise production. While they keep this power there are no reforms or measures that the democratic or socialist governments of the bourgeois countries could adopt to save the situation or alleviate the terrible and unbearable sufferings of the working women and men which result from the collapse of the capitalist economic system. Only by seizing power can the class of producers take hold of the means of production, thus making it possible to direct economic development in the interests of the working people.

To accelerate the inevitable and final battle between the proletariat and the obsolete bourgeois world, the working class must adhere firmly and without hesitation to the tactics outlined by the III International. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the fundamental and immediate goal and this determines for the proletariat of both sexes the methods of work and the direction the struggle takes.

The struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat is the most important question facing the proletariat in the capitalist countries. In those countries where dictatorship is already in the hands of the workers, the building of a Communist society is the vital question. The III Congress of the Communist International maintains that without the active participation of the broad masses of the female proletariat and the semi-proletarian women, the proletariat can neither seize power nor realise communism.

At the same time, the Congress once again draws the attention of all women to the fact that without Communist Party support for all the projects leading to the liberation of women, the recognition of women's rights as equal human beings and their real emancipation cannot in practice be won.

2 In the present period particularly, it is in the interests of the working class that women are drawn into the organised ranks of the proletariat as it fights for Communism. As the economic dislocation increases on a world scale and the consequences press more heavily on all the urban and rural poor, the question of social revolution is more sharply posed for the working class of the bourgeois-capitalist countries, while the working people of Soviet Russia face the task of creating a national economy on new Communist lines. The active, conscious and

determined participation of women will ensure that these goals are more easily realised.

Where the question of winning power is posed directly, the Communist Party has to take into account the enormous danger presented to the revolution by the masses of passive working women who are outside the movement – the housewives, office workers and peasant women who are still under the influence of the bourgeois world-view, the church and tradition, and have no links with the great liberation movement for communism. Women that stand outside this movement are inevitably a stronghold of bourgeois ideas and a target for counter-revolutionary propaganda, both in the West and in the East. The experience of the Hungarian revolution, where women's lack of class consciousness played such a sad role, must serve as a warning for the proletariat elsewhere as it takes the road of social revolution.

On the other hand, events in the Soviet republic are a concrete example of how essential the participation of working and peasant women is in the civil war, the defence of the republic and all other areas of Soviet life. The important role that working and peasant women have already played in the Soviet republic has been clearly shown: in organising defence, strengthening the home front, combating desertion and all kinds of counter-revolutionary activity, sabotage, etc. Other countries must study and learn from the experience of the workers' republic.

It follows that the Communist Parties must extend their influence over the widest layers of the female population by means of organising special apparatuses inside the Party and establishing special methods of approaching women, with the aim of liberating them from the influence of the bourgeois world-view or the influence of the compromising parties, and of educating them to be resolute fighters for Communism and consequently for the full development of women.

3 While making the improvement of Party work amongst the female proletariat an immediate task of both the Western and Eastern Communist Parties, the III Congress of the Communist International at the same time points out to the working women of the whole world that their liberation from centuries of enslavement, lack of rights and inequality is possible *only through the victory of Communism*, and that the bourgeois women's movement is completely incapable of guaranteeing women that which Communism gives. So long as the power of capital and private property exists, the liberation of woman from dependence on a husband can go no further than the right to dispose of her own property and her own wage and decide on equal terms with her husband the future of her children.

The most radical feminist demand – the extension of the suffrage to women in the framework of bourgeois parliamentarianism – does not solve the question of real equality for women, especially those of the propertyless classes. The experience of working women in all those capitalist countries in which, over recent years, the bourgeoisie has introduced formal equality of the sexes makes this clear. The vote does not destroy the prime cause of women's enslavement in the family and society. Some bourgeois states have substituted civil marriage for indissoluble marriage. But as long as the proletarian woman remains economically dependent upon the capitalist boss and her husband, the breadwinner, and in the absence of comprehensive measures to protect motherhood and childhood and provide socialised child-care and education, this cannot equalise the position of women in marriage or solve the problem of relationships between the sexes.

The real equality of women, as opposed to formal and superficial equality, will be achieved only under Communism, when women and all the other members of the labouring class will become co-owners of the means of production and distribution and will take part in administering them, and women will share on an equal footing with all the members of the labour society the duty to work; in other words, it will be achieved by overthrowing the capitalist system of production and exploitation which is based on the exploitation of human labour, and by organising a Communist economy.

Only Communism creates conditions whereby the conflict between the natural function of woman – maternity – and her social obligations, which hinder her creative work for the collective, will disappear and the harmonious and many-sided development of a healthy and balanced personality firmly and closely in tune with the life and goals of the labour-collective will be completed. All women who fight for the emancipation of woman and the recognition of her rights must have as their aim the creation of a Communist society.

But Communism is also the final aim of the proletariat as a whole and therefore, in the interests of both sides, the two struggles must be fought as 'a single and indivisible' struggle.

4 The Third Congress of the Communist International supports the basic position of revolutionary Marxism that there is no 'special' women's question, nor should there be a special women's movement, and that any alliance between working women and bourgeois feminism or support for the vacillating or clearly right-wing tactics of the social compromisers and opportunists will lead to the weakening of the forces of the proletariat, thereby delaying the great hour of the full emancipation of women.

A Communist society will be won not by the united efforts of women of different classes, but by the united struggle of all the exploited.

The masses of proletarian women must, in their own interests, support the revolutionary tactics of the Communist Party and take as active and direct a part as possible in mass action and in every type and form of civil war that emerges both on the national and international scale.

5 At its highest stage, the struggle of women against their dual oppression (by capitalism and by their own domestic family dependence) must take on an international character, developing into a struggle (fought under the banner of the III International) by the proletariat of both sexes for their dictatorship and for the Soviet system.

6 The III Congress of the Communist International warns working women against any kind of co-operation or agreement with bourgeois feminists. At the same time, it makes clear to proletarian women that any illusions that it is possible to support the II International or opportunist elements close to it without damaging the cause of women's liberation will do serious harm to the liberation struggle of the proletariat. Women must never forget that the slavery of women is rooted in the bourgeois system and that to end this slavery a new Communist society has to be brought into being.

The support working women give to the groups and parties of the II and Two-and-a-Half Internationals is a brake on the social revolution, delaying the advent of the new order. If women turn from the II and Two-and-a-Half Internationals with resolution and without compromise, the victory of the social revolution will be more sure. Communist women must condemn all those who are afraid of the revolutionary tactics of the Communist International and stand firm for their exclusion from the closed ranks of the Communist International.

Women must remember that the II International has never even tried to set up any kind of organisation to further the struggle for the full liberation of women. The international unification of Socialist women was begun outside the framework of the II International at the initiative of working women themselves. The Socialist women who conducted special work amongst women had neither status nor representation nor full voting rights.

At its very first Congress, in 1919, the Third International clearly formulated its attitude to the question of drawing women into the struggle for proletarian dictatorship. The Congress called a conference of women Communists and in 1920 an International Secretariat for work amongst women was established with a

permanent representative on the Executive Committee of the Communist International. All class-conscious working women should break unconditionally with the II and Two-and-a-Half Internationals and give their support to the revolutionary line of the Communist International.

7 Women who work in factories, offices and fields must show their support for the Communist International by joining the Communist Parties. In those countries and parties where the struggle between the II and III International has not yet come to a head, working women must do all they can to support the party or group which is standing for the Communist International and, whatever the accepted leaders say or do, must ruthlessly fight against all who are vacillating or have gone over openly to the other side. Class-conscious proletarian women who want emancipation must not stay in parties which stand outside the Communist International.

To be against the III International is to be an enemy of the liberation of women.

Class-conscious working women in both the West and East should support the Communist International as members of the Communist Parties of their countries. Any hesitation on their part, or fear of breaking with the familiar compromising parties and the recognised leaders disastrously affects the success of the great proletarian struggle which is developing into a ruthless and global civil war.

Methods and Forms of Work among Women

The III Congress of the Communist International holds, therefore, that work among the female proletariat must be conducted by all Communist Parties on the following basis:

1 Women must be included in all the militant class organisations – the Party, the trade unions, the co-operatives, Soviets of factory representatives etc., with equal rights and equal responsibilities.

2 The importance must be recognised of drawing women into all areas of the active struggle of the proletariat (including the military defence of the proletariat) and of constructing in all areas the foundations of a new society and organising production and everyday life on Communist lines.

3 The maternal function must be recognised as a social function and the appropriate measures to defend and protect women as child-bearers must be taken or fought for.

The III Congress of the Communist International is firmly opposed to any kind of separate women's associations in the Parties and trade unions or special women's organisations, but it accepts that special methods of work among women are necessary and that every Communist Party should set up a special apparatus for this work. In adopting this position, the Congress takes into consideration the following:

- a)** the oppression women suffer in everyday life not only in the bourgeois-capitalist countries, but in countries with a Soviet structure, in transition from capitalism to communism;
- b)** the great passivity and political backwardness of the female masses, which is to be explained by the fact that for centuries women have been excluded from social life and enslaved in the family;
- c)** the special function – childbirth – which nature assigns to women, and the specificities connected with this function, call for the greater protection of their energies and health in the interests of the whole collective.

The III Congress of the Communist International therefore recognises that a special apparatus for conducting work among women is necessary. This apparatus must consist of departments or commissions for work among women, attached to every Party committee at all levels, from the CC of the Party right down to the urban, district or local Party committee. This decision is binding on all Parties in the Communist International.

The Third Congress of the Communist International indicates that the tasks of the Communist Parties to be carried out through these departments include the following:

- 1** to educate women in Communist ideas and draw them into the ranks of the Party;
- 2** to fight the prejudices against women held by the mass of the male proletariat, and increase the awareness of working men and women that they have common interests;
- 3** to strengthen the will of working women by drawing them into all forms and types of civil conflict, encouraging women in the bourgeois countries to participate in the struggle against capitalist exploitation, in mass action against the high cost of living, against the housing shortage, unemployment and around other social problems, and women in the Soviet republics to take part in the formation of the Communist personality and the Communist way of life;

4 to put on the Party's agenda and to include in legislative proposals questions directly concerning the emancipation of women, confirming their liberation, defending their interests as child-bearers;

5 to conduct a well-planned struggle against the power of tradition, bourgeois customs and religious ideas, clearing the way for healthier and more harmonious relations between the sexes, guaranteeing the physical and moral vitality of working people.

The Party committees directly lead and are responsible for all the work of the women's departments or commissions. The head of the department or commission must be a member of the Party committee. Wherever possible, the members of the departments or commissions should be Communists.

The commissions or departments of working women should not work independently. In the Soviet countries they should work through the appropriate economic or political organs (Soviet departments, commissions, trade unions); in capitalist countries they should have the support of the appropriate proletarian organisations: Party, unions, Soviets, etc.

Wherever Communist Parties exist illegally or semi-legally, they must still create an apparatus for work among women. This apparatus must be subordinate to the general Party apparatus and adapt to the situation of illegality. All local, regional and central illegal organisations should have, in the same way as legal organisations, one woman comrade responsible for organising propaganda among women. In the modern epoch the *trade unions*, *production unions* and co-operatives must serve as the basis for Party work among women both in countries where the struggle for the overthrow of capital is still in progress and in the Soviet workers' republics.

Work amongst women must be informed by an understanding of the unity of the Party movement and organisation, but at the same time show independent initiative and, proceeding independently from other Party commissions or sections, work towards the rapid and full emancipation of women. The goal should be not to duplicate work but to enable working women to help the Party and its activities.

Party Work among Women in the Soviet Countries

In the Soviet workers' republic the role of the departments is to educate the women in Communist ideas, to draw them into the Communist Party and develop their self-activity and independence, involving them in the construction of

Communism and educating them to be firm defenders of the Communist International.

The departments must help women take part in all branches of Soviet construction, in matters ranging from defence to the many and complex economic plans of the republic.

In the Soviet republic the departments must make sure that the resolutions of the 8th Congress of Soviets on drawing working and peasant women into the construction and organisation of the national economy and on their participation in all bodies which guide, administer, control and organise production are being carried out. Through their representatives and through Party bodies, the departments must participate in drafting new laws and influence the redrafting of those which need altering in the interests of the liberation of women. The departments must show particular initiative in developing laws to protect the labour of women and young people.

The departments must draw the greatest possible number of working and peasant women into the Soviet election campaign and see that working and peasant women are elected to the Soviets and their executive committees.

The departments must work for the success of all political and economic campaigns conducted by the Party.

The departments must promote the acquisition of skills by female workers, by improving the technical education of women and making sure that working and peasant women have access to the appropriate educational institutions.

It is the job of the departments to see that working women are included in the enterprise commissions on the protection of labour and that the commissions of aid for the protection of maternity and childhood are more active.

The departments must contribute to the development of the entire network of social institutions: communal dining rooms, laundries, repair shops, institutions of social welfare, house-communes etc., which transform everyday life along new, Communist lines and relieve women of the difficulties of the transitional period. Such social institutions which help emancipate women's everyday lives, turning the slave of the home and family into a free member of the working class – the class which is its own boss and the creator of new forms of living.

The departments must encourage the education of women trade-union members in Communist ideas, with the help of organisations for work among women set up by the Communist fraction in the trade unions.

The departments must ensure that working women attend general factory and general factory delegate meetings.

The departments must systematically appoint delegate-practitioners to Soviet, economic and union work.

[When delegates were freed from factory work for their term, while retaining a wage, they were called 'practitioners'. The idea was for them to work in various Soviet institutions and thus gain experience of governing.]

The women's departments of the Party must above all work to develop firm links with working women and closer contact with housewives, office workers, and poor peasant women.

The departments should call and organise working women's delegate meetings in order to create firm ties between the Party and the masses, extend the influence of the Party to the non-Party masses and educate the mass of women in Communist ideas through independent activity and participation in practical work.

The delegate meetings are the most effective means of educating working and peasant women; through the delegates the influence of the Party can be extended to the non-Party masses and the backward masses of working and peasant women.

The delegate meetings are to be attended by representatives of the factories of the given region, town or rural area (where it is a question of electing rural delegates through meetings of peasant women) or of the neighbourhood, where it is a question of electing housewife delegates. In Soviet Russia the delegates are involved in every kind of political or economic campaign, sent to work on various enterprise commissions, drawn into control of Soviet institutions and, finally, given work as practitioners for a period of two months in the departments of the Soviets (law of 1921).

The delegates are to be elected at workshop meetings or at meetings of housewives or office workers according to the norm laid down by the Party. The departments must conduct propaganda and agitational work among the delegates, for which purpose meetings are held not less than twice a month. The delegates must report on their activity to their shops or to their residential area meetings. The delegates are elected for a period of three months. Broadly-based non-Party conferences of

working and peasant women are the second form of agitation among the female masses. The representatives who attend these conferences are elected at the meetings of working women in the enterprises, and of peasant women in the villages.

The working women's departments take the lead in caning and organising these conferences.

The departments or commissions conduct consistent and extensive propaganda, both verbal and printed, in order to build on the experience the working women gain from their practical work in the Party. The departments organise meetings and discussions; they organise working women in the factories and housewives in the neighbourhoods, lead delegates' meetings and conduct house-to-house agitation.

Sections for work among women must be established to train special cadres and to expand work in the Soviet schools at the central and at the district level.

In Bourgeois-Capitalist Countries

The current tasks of the commissions for work among women are dictated by the objective situation. On the one hand, the collapse of the world economy, the horrific growth of unemployment which has the effect of reducing the demand for women workers and increasing prostitution, the high cost of living, the desperate housing shortage and the threats of new imperialist wars; and, on the other hand, the succession of economic strikes by workers everywhere and the repeated attempts to begin the civil war on a world scale – all this is the prologue to world social revolution.

The commissions of working women must concern themselves with the important tasks of the proletariat, fight for the Party's slogans in their entirety, and involve women in the revolutionary action the Party takes against the bourgeoisie and the social compromisers.

The commissions must make sure not only that women join the Party, the trade unions and other class organisations and have equal rights and equal obligations (they must counter any attempts to isolate or separate off working women), but that women are brought into the leading bodies of the Parties, unions and co-operatives on equal terms with men.

The commissions must encourage the broad layers of the female proletariat and the peasant women to use their electoral rights in the interests of the Communist Parties during elections to parliament and to all social institutions, explaining at the

same time that these rights are limited and can do little to weaken capitalist exploitation or further the emancipation of women and that the Soviet system is superior to the parliamentary one.

The commissions must also see that the working women, office workers and peasant women take an active part in the election of revolutionary economic and political Soviets of workers' deputies – they must bring housewives into political activity and explain the idea of Soviets to the peasant women. The commissions must work in particular to realise the principle of equal pay for equal work. They must also draw working women and men into a campaign for free and universal vocational education which would help women workers increase their skills.

The commissions must see that Communist women take part in the municipal and other legislative organs wherever suffrage laws give this opportunity, introducing them to the revolutionary tactics of their Party. Participating in the legislative, municipal and other organs of the bourgeois states, Communist women must defend the basic principles and tactics of their Party; they must concentrate less on the practical realisation of reforms in the framework of the bourgeois system and more on using the questions and demands that arise out of the urgent needs and everyday experience of working women as revolutionary slogans to draw women into a fight to win these demands through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The commissions must be in close contact with the parliamentary and local government fractions and discuss with them any questions which relate to women.

The commissions must explain to women that the system of individual domestic economies is backward and uneconomical and that the bourgeois method of bringing up children is far from perfect. They must concentrate the attention of working women on the proposals for improving the everyday life of the working class being put forward or supported by the Party.

The commissions must help draw women trade-union members into the Communist Parties. Special organisers should be appointed to undertake this work under the leadership of the Party or its local sections.

The women's agitational commissions must do propaganda work to persuade working women in the co-operatives to fight for Communist ideas and assume a leading role in these organisations which will have a very important role to play during and after the revolution as centres of distribution.

The entire work of the commissions must be aimed at developing the revolutionary activity of the masses, and thus hastening the social revolution.

In the Economically Backward Countries (The East)

In countries where industry is underdeveloped the Communist Parties and the departments of working women must make sure that the Party, the unions and the other organisations of the labouring class recognise that women have equal rights and equal responsibilities.

The departments or commissions and the Party must fight all prejudices and all religious and secular customs that oppress women; they must carry out this agitation among men as well.

The Communist Parties and their departments or commissions must take the principles of women's equality into the spheres of child education, family relations and public life.

The departments must seek support above all from the broad layer of women exploited by capital, i.e., who work in the cottage industries and on the rice and cotton plantations. In the Soviet countries the departments must encourage the setting up of craft workshops. In countries where the bourgeois system still exists, work must be concentrated on organising women who work on the plantations and on drawing them into unions alongside the men.

In the Soviet countries of the East the raising of the general cultural level of the population is the best method of overcoming backwardness and religious prejudices. The departments must encourage the development of schools for adults that are open to women. In the bourgeois countries the commissions must wage a direct struggle against the bourgeois influence in the schools.

Wherever possible, the departments or commissions must do house-to-house agitation. The departments must organise clubs for working women and encourage the most backward of them to join. The clubs must be cultural centres and experimental model institutions that show how women can work towards their emancipation through self-activity (the organisation of creches, nurseries, literacy schools attached to clubs, etc.).

Mobile clubs should be organised to work among nomadic peoples.

In Soviet countries the departments must help the appropriate Soviet organs to make the transition from pre-capitalist forms of economy to social forms of production, convincing working women by practical example that the domestic

economy and the previous family form block their emancipation, while social labour liberates them.

In Soviet Russia the departments must see that the legislation which recognises the equal rights of women with men and defends the interests of women is observed among the Eastern peoples. The departments must encourage women to work as judges and juries in national courts of law.

The departments must also involve women in the Soviet elections, checking the social composition of the working and peasant women in the Soviets and executive committees. Work among the female proletariat of the East must be carried out on a class basis. The departments have to show that the feminists are incapable of finding a solution to the question of female emancipation. In the Soviet countries of the East, women of the intelligentsia (teachers, for example) who sympathise with Communism should be drawn into educational campaigns. Avoiding tactless and crude attacks on religious beliefs or national traditions, the departments or commissions working among the women of the East must still struggle against nationalism and the power of religion over people's minds.

In the East, as in the West, the organisation of working women must be geared not to the defence of national interests but to the unity of the international proletariat of both sexes around the common goals of the class.

[Because work among women of the East is so important and at the same time so new, special instructions are appended to the theses which explain how the basic methods of Communist Party work among women are to be applied in the specific conditions of everyday life in the East.]

Methods of Agitation and Propaganda

The Communist Parties of the West and East must grasp the basic principle of work among women – 'agitation and propaganda through action'. Then they will be capable of carrying out their most important task, which is the Communist education of the women of the proletariat and the training of fighters for Communism.

Agitation by action means above all encouraging working women to self-activity, dispelling the doubts they have about their own abilities and drawing them into practical work in the sphere of construction or struggle. It means teaching them through experience to know that every gain made by the Communist Party, every action directed against the exploitation of capital, is a step towards improving the position of women. Firstly, practice and action, that lead to an understanding of

Communist ideals and theoretical principles; and secondly, theory, that leads to practice and action – these are the methods of work the Communist Parties and their working women's departments must employ in approaching the mass of women.

The departments must be in close contact with the Communist cells in the enterprises and workshops, making sure that each cell has an organiser to carry out work among women in the factory in question. In this way the departments will be centres of action and not of verbal propaganda alone.

The departments and the trade unions must keep in contact through their representatives or organisers, who are appointed by the trade-union fractions but conduct their work under the leadership of the departments.

In the Soviet countries the spreading of Communist ideas through action means bringing working women, peasant women, housewives and women office workers into all branches of Soviet construction, ranging from the army and the police through to those which directly emancipate women by their organisation of communal eating, a network of institutions of social education, the protection of motherhood, etc. It is particularly important at the present moment to draw working women into work connected with the restoration of the national economy.

In the capitalist countries propaganda by deed means above all encouraging working women to participate in strikes, demonstrations and any type of struggle which strengthens and deepens their revolutionary will and consciousness. It also means drawing them into all types of Party work, including illegal work (especially liaison work) and the organisation of Party *subbotniks* or Sundays at which the wives of workers and women office workers who sympathise with Communism work voluntarily for the Party and organise sessions to sew and repair children's clothes, etc.

The principle of drawing women into all the Parties' political, economic and educational campaigns is one aspect of propaganda by action.

In the capitalist countries the departments must extend their activity and their influence to the most backward and oppressed female proletariat. In the Soviet countries they must conduct their work among the proletarian and semi-proletarian female masses, enslaved by the conditions and prejudices of everyday life.

The commissions must carry out work among the working women, housewives and peasant women, and the women engaged in mental labour (the intelligentsia).

For the purposes of propaganda and agitation, the commissions must organise public meetings, meetings at individual enterprises and meetings of working women and women office-workers (either by trade or by district). They must also organise general women's meetings, meetings of housewives, etc.

In capitalist countries the commissions make sure that the fractions of the Communist Parties in the trade unions, co-operatives and factory councils appoint women's organisers; that, in other words, they have representatives in all organisations which help develop the revolutionary activity of the proletariat towards seizure of power. In Soviet countries they encourage the appointment of working and peasant women to all Soviet organisations which lead, administer and control social life and which serve to support the proletarian dictatorship and contribute to the realisation of Communism.

The commissions must assign proletarian women Communists to work in factories or offices where there are a large number of women; they must send Communist working women into large proletarian neighbourhoods and industrial centres, as has been tried with success in Soviet Russia.

Commissions for work amongst women must make use of the highly successful experience of the women's department of the RCP in order to organise delegates' meetings and non-Party conferences of working and peasant women. Meetings of working women and women office-workers from various sectors, and of peasant women and housewives, must be organised, at which concrete demands and needs are discussed and commissions elected. These commissions must keep in close touch with those who elect them and with the commissions for work among women. The commissions must send their agitators to take part in debates at the meetings of parties hostile to Communism. Propaganda and agitation through meetings and debates must be complemented by well-organised house-to-house agitation. The Communist women doing this work must each be responsible for no more than ten households; they must make visits at least once a week to do agitation among housewives, and call more frequently when the Communist Party is conducting a campaign or is preparing any kind of action.

The commissions are instructed to use the written word in the course of their agitational, organisational and educational work:

1 to help publish a central paper on work among women in every country;

2 to guarantee the publication of 'Working women's pages' or special supplements in the Party press, and also the inclusion of articles on questions of work amongst women in the general Party and trade-union press; the commissions are responsible

for the appointment of editors to the above-mentioned publications and training working women, both Party members and non-Party members, to work for the press.

The commissions must see to the issuing of popular agitational and educational literature in the forms of leaflets and pamphlets and they must help in their distribution.

The commissions must enable Communist women to make the most effective use of all political and educational institutions of the Party.

The commissions must work to strengthen the class consciousness and militancy of the young Communist women, involving them in general Party courses and discussion evenings. Special evenings of reading and discussion or a series of talks especially for working women should be organised only where they are really necessary and expedient.

In order to strengthen comradeship between working women and working men, it is desirable not to organise special courses and schools for Communist women, but all general Party schools must without fail include a course on the methods of work among women. The departments must have the right to delegate a certain number of their representatives to the general Party courses.

The Structure of the Departments

Departments and commissions of work among women are attached to every Party committee, at local and regional Party level and at CC level. The size is determined by the Party and depends on the needs of the particular country. The number of paid workers on these commissions is also determined by the Party in accordance with its financial resources.

The director of the women's agitational department or the person chairing the commission should be a member of the local Party committee. Where this is not the case the director of the department should be present at all the sessions of the committee with full voting rights on all questions concerning the women's department and a consultative vote on all other questions.

As well as the above-mentioned general work, the district or county department or commission has the following additional functions: encouraging contact between the departments of the given district and the central department; collecting information about the activity of the departments or commissions of the district/region in question; ensuring that the local departments have the

opportunity to exchange material; supplying the district/county with literature; sending agitators to the districts; mobilising Party members for work amongst women; calling district/county conferences not less than twice a year, at which each department is represented by one or two Communist women; and holding non-Party conferences of working and peasant women and housewives of the given district/county.

The members of the collegium are nominated by the head of the department or commission and approved by the county or district committee. The director is elected in the same way as other members of the district and county committees – at the district or county Party conference.

The members of the district/county and local departments or commissions are elected at town, district or county conferences or are appointed by the appropriate departments in contact with the Party committees.

If the director of the women's department is not a member of the district Party committee/country Party committee, she has the right to be present at all the sessions of the Party committee with full voting rights on questions concerning the departments and a consultative vote on all other questions.

The central Party department, in addition to the functions listed for the district/county departments, also instructs the women's agitational department over questions of Party work, supervises the work of the departments, directs, in contact with the appropriate Party bodies, the allocation of personnel engaged in work amongst women, checks the conditions and progress of female labour, bearing in mind the changes in the legal and economic situation of women, participates through its representatives or authorised persons in special commissions working on the question of improving or changing the everyday life of the working class, the protection of labour and childhood, etc., publishes a 'central women's page', edits a regular journal for working women, calls a meeting, not less than once a year, for the representatives of all the district/county departments, organises national speaking tours for instructors on work among women, ensures that working women and all departments take part in all the Party's political and economic campaigns and actions, delegates a representative to the International Secretariat of Communist women and organises an annual International Working Women's Day.

If the director of the women's department is not a member of the CC, she has the right to be present at all sessions of the CC with full voting rights on questions concerning the departments, and with a consultative vote on all other questions. The director of the women's department or the chairperson of the commission is

appointed by the CC of the Party or is elected at an all – Party Congress. Decisions and resolutions passed by all departments or commissions have to be finally approved by the appropriate Party committee. The size of the central department and the number of members to have full voting rights are decided by the CC of the Party.

On International Work

The International women's Secretariat of the Communist International leads the women's work of the Communist Parties at the international level, unites working women to struggle for the goals put forward by the Communist International, and draws women of all countries and all peoples into the revolutionary struggle for the power of the Soviets and the dictatorship of the working class.

Forms and Methods of Communist Work among Women

Source: *Theses Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congress of the Third International*, translated by Alix Holt and Barbara Holland. Ink Links 1980;

Transcribed: by Andy Blunden.

8 July 1921

The Second International Conference of Communist women [The first women's conference had been held in the summer of 1920] in Moscow declares:

The collapse of the capitalist economy and the bourgeois system, together with the development of the social revolution throughout the world, makes it urgently necessary for the proletariat in those countries still burdened by this system to engage in revolutionary struggle to win political power and establish its dictatorship. This can only be achieved if the broadest masses of working women are consciously and resolutely involved in this struggle and are willing to make sacrifices.

In countries such as Soviet Russia where the proletariat has already won state power and, by introducing the Soviet system, has established its dictatorship, the struggle against the national and world counter-revolution and the organisation of a Communist system cannot be carried out unless the broad masses of working women are absolutely and unshakeably convinced that the struggle for and building up of a new society concerns them as well.

The Second International Conference of Communist women taking place in Moscow therefore calls upon the Communist Parties everywhere to carry out the resolution and the decision of the III International, take seriously the organisation of the broad masses of working women for revolutionary struggle and revolutionary construction, engage in propaganda and agitation among the female proletariat to spread Communist ideas, and draw these women into the Communist Party, thereby deepening and developing their will and ability to be active and to fight.

Every Party in the III International must organise sections attached to their Party Committees, sections for work amongst women, which must be headed by a Committee member. Departments for work among women are not special organisations within the Communist Parties; their role is specific – to mobilise and educate the broadest masses of working women to struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and for a Communist society. The departments for work among women carry out all their work under the leadership of the Party, but their forms and methods of work have to be sufficiently flexible to adapt themselves to the specificities of the position of women in the family and in society. The work of these departments is described in detail in the theses passed by the conference.

The departments for work among women must always be conscious of their dual task which is:

1 to inspire in the female proletarian masses a high level of class consciousness and a firm commitment to engage in the revolutionary class struggle, the struggle of all humiliated and oppressed people against the bourgeoisie, and the struggle for communism;

2 after the victory of the proletarian revolution, to involve them in a conscious and dedicated way in the joint work needed to build a Communist society.

Departments for work among women must remember that their job involves more than just verbal and written agitation and propaganda. Their main concern is to carry out agitation through action – the most effective method at their disposal – and, in all the capitalist countries, to encourage working women to take an active part in all the actions and struggles of the revolutionary proletariat, in strikes, street demonstrations and armed uprisings, while in Soviet countries they must give working women an active part to play in all spheres of Communist construction.

Resolution on Strengthening International Contact and on the Tasks of the Comintern's International Secretariat on Work among Women.

Source: *Theses Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congress of the Third International*, translated by Alix Holt and Barbara Holland. Ink Links 1980;

Transcribed: by Andy Blunden.

8 July 1921

1 The Second International Conference of Communist women proposes that all the Communist Parties in both Western and Eastern countries, in accordance with the positions of the III Communist International, authorise their women's departments to appoint responsible Communist women as international correspondents.

2 It is the duty of the correspondents of the individual national Communist Parties to maintain as far as possible constant exchange of information with the Secretariat in Moscow, which is attached to the Executive Committee of the III Communist International and is responsible for work amongst women.

3 The appointed correspondents can only do their job if they make wide use of all technical and other resources of the Communist Parties of each country, which these Parties are bound to place at their disposal.

4 The International Women's Secretariat organises regular meetings for correspondents twice a year, or more frequently, if necessary.

5 The IWS in Moscow is closely connected organisationally with the Executive Committee of the Third Communist International and works under its direct leadership and in close contact with the correspondents of all Western and Eastern countries. The IWS pays particular attention to 1) the activity of departments for work among proletarian women in the Communist Parties where insufficient work is being carried out and the basic principles and positions of the III International are being disregarded, 2) giving the women's Communist movement of all countries a single direction and 3) organising working women's campaigns on an international

scale that can draw the revolutionary movement of the whole proletariat into the struggle for its dictatorship.

6 To achieve the closest contact between working women in different countries and co-ordinate their work, the IWS is setting up a West European auxiliary-technical body, whose task is to undertake preparatory work and carry out the resolutions of the IWS in accordance with the directives of the Secretariat, and also of the Executive Committee of the III Communist International.

7 A representative of the IWS shall be included on the West European auxiliary body.

8 The Executive Committee of the Communist International in conjunction with the IWS decides the composition, the basic tasks, and the scope of activity of the West European auxiliary body.

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